

# A Virtuous Woman

**David Arnold**

Concerning D. L. Moody, Henry Drummond wrote, "If you were to ask Mr. Moody what, apart from his personal faith, was the secret of his success, of his happiness, and usefulness, he would assuredly answer, 'Mrs. Moody.'"[1]

Proverbs 31:10–31 (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2031.10%E2%80%9331>) describes 'a virtuous woman'. First, in verse 10, we find the inquiry, and then, in verses 11–31, her description.

First, the inquiry: "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies" (v. 10, NKJV).[2] 'Virtuous' means "a noble, capable wife; a woman of strength, moral goodness, and resolution". The same phrase is found in Proverbs 12:4 (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2012.4>) and is translated, "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband." Such a woman's worth is "far above rubies", meaning 'more valuable than precious stones and costly pearls'. The Septuagint states, "Such a one is more valuable than precious stones."

"All other goods by fortune's hand are given;

A wife is the peculiar gift of Heaven."[3]

Second, the virtuous woman is described in seven ways:



## 1. Her Husband (vv. 11, 12, 23).

First, she is trustworthy. "The heart of her husband safely trusts her" (v. 11). Her husband can go forth to his daily occupation, having full confidence that she will conduct herself honorably.

Second, she is contributing "so he will have no lack of gain" (v. 11). She will not squander what they have built together, but will improve upon and increase it.

Third, she is good. "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life" (v. 12). Her love does not diminish or change in the good and bad times; it is perpetual. She does him good, not only all the days of his life, but also of her own. If she survives him, she still does him good in the care of his children, estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him.

Fourth, she adds to her husband's reputation. "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land" (v. 23). The saying, 'Behind every successful man is a good woman', is still very true. She enables her husband to be his highest and best self, not by fading into the background, but by supporting and loving him. ~~G. Campbell Morgan had four sons, and they all became ministers. At a family reunion, a friend asked one of the sons, "Which Morgan is the greatest preacher?" The son looked at his father and promptly replied, "Mother!"[4]~~

## 2. Her Home (vv. 13, 15, 17–19, 27).

First, she applies herself by being diligent, pleasant, and cheerful (vv. 13, 19). "She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands" (v. 13). Spinning at the loom was the chief occupation of women in ancient times. Wool was used for clothing, and flax for various domestic uses. She does this "willingly . . . with her hands," or 'with willing hands, laboring diligently and finding pleasure in doing so'. Actually this reads, "She works with the counsel and delight of her hands." While applying herself, she retains her femininity. "She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle" (v. 19). These instruments, or tools, were often used as symbols of womanhood and femininity, in contrast to the use of the bow and arrow to symbolize a man's strength. This verse may be interpreted, 'She is truly feminine, or in spite of her hard work and family involvements, she never loses her feminine charm'.

Second, she is diligent. "She also rises while it is yet night" (v. 15). In Eastern houses, a small lamp was always kept burning. The careful housewife would rise at midnight to replenish the oil, and before dawn, she would be up and stirring. This speaks of being diligent in her care of the family.

Third, she takes care of her health. "She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms" (v. 17). This phrase is metaphorically expressive of how she watches over her physical well-being, so as to maintain her energy and strength.

Fourth, she is prudent. "Her lamp does not go out by night" (v. 18). The oil lamps of ancient times would burn all night. The meaning is, she has plenty of oil. She is careful to fill up her time, and does not squander away her life.

Fifth, she is active. She "does not eat the bread of idleness" (v. 27). She refuses to sit still and do nothing. Recognizing her own gifts and talents, she contributes to her generation.

## 3. Her Management (verses 14–16, 18, 21–22, 24, 25, 27).

First, she is a wise shopper. "She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar" (v. 14). The Septuagint states, 'She is like a ship trading from a distance, and she herself gathers her livelihood'. The implication is that she searches for the best buys.

Second, she is a good manager. She "provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. . . . She watches over the ways of her household" (vv. 15, 27). The word 'portion' means "an allotment of work," or "the daily task assigned." She carefully plans and directs the daily tasks and responsibilities of the servant girls.

Third, she is a good investor. "She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard . . . . She perceives that her merchandise is good . . . . She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants" (vv. 16, 18, 24). In buying, selling, and investing, she demonstrates good financial sense.

Fourth, she is conscious of her appearance and that of her children (vv. 21–22). Her children are "clothed with scarlet," meaning 'good clothing' (v. 21). Her own apparel is attractive, yet modest. 'Tapestry,' 'fine linen,' and 'purple', are all expressive of how she dresses well (v. 22).

Fifth, she is an optimistic planner. "She shall rejoice in time to come" (v. 25). Because of her planning and preparation, she looks forward to the future with confidence, not with anxious care.

## 4. Her Compassion.

"She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy" (v. 20). While caring for her own with unselfish love, she also reaches out in compassion to those who are in need.

## 5. Her Talk.

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness" (v. 26). She guides her family with words of wisdom. Her language to those around her is regulated with love. Some read this, 'In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy'.

## 6. Her Beauty.

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (v. 30). Outward beauty is temporary, superficial, and deceptive. Knowing this, she develops her spiritual beauty, which is enduring, deep, satisfying, and worthy of honor.

**On her tongue is the law  
of kindness**

## 7. Her Crown.

First, she has moral force and courage. "Strength and honor are her clothing" (v. 25). Second, she receives respect. "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her" (v. 28). Third, she is exalted. "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all" (v. 29). Fourth, she receives praise and honor. She is to be honored, loved, and respected by her husband and children. "Give her of the fruit of her hands" (v. 31). She is to be held in high regard by society. "Let her own works praise her in the gates" (v. 31).

Marvin Tate said, "The real worth of a woman is her devotion to God. She should be given the praise she deserves. She is no slave of a master husband, but a person in her own right, who takes a full and honored place in the life of home and community." [5]

[1] Henry Drummond, *God's Principles for Daily Living: The Book of Proverbs*, vol. 14, *Adult Student* (Des Plaines, Ill.: Regular Baptist Press, July–Sept. 1966), 70.

[2] All Scripture verses are quoted from the New King James Version.

[3] Alexander Pope; quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, vol. 9, *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.). 606.

[4] Available online: <http://www.bible-truth.org/msg78.html> (<http://www.bible-truth.org/msg78.html>).

[5] Marvin Tate, *The Broadman Commentary, Proverbs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982), 99.

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